

THE PLEDGES OF THE GOVERNMENT.

“WE MUST NOT INVADE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS.” “SAVAGES
MUST NOT BE LET LOOSE.”

[*Stephen A. Douglas, Chicago, June, 1861.*]

SPEECH

OF

HON. D. W. VOORHEES, OF IND.,

In the House of Representatives, February 20, 1862.

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The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. VOORHEES said :

Mr. CHAIRMAN : The first duty, perhaps, of one who attempts to address a deliberative body, is a clear and candid definition of his own position on the subject under discussion. I am willing and ready to meet that requirement on this occasion. I propose to discuss the duty of the Federal Government in its relation to the unhappy war which now afflicts the nation, and the objects for which alone that war should be prosecuted. And standing here, a loyal and faithful citizen, recognising to the fullest extent the bond of my allegiance, I declare my purpose to sustain the Government with all my energies in all its constitutional efforts to maintain unbroken the union of these States as our fathers made it ; that I will sustain it with all my energies in so conducting this war that it shall “not be waged in the spirit of conquest or subjugation, nor for the purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or institutions of the States ; but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired ;” but that I shall oppose unalterably, in all constitutional methods, and to the utmost of my ability, the prosecution of this war for the purpose of subjugating the Southern States, reducing them to the condition of Territories, subverting their institutions and laws, or liberating their slaves. This position I conceive to be one on which every lover of the Union, every disciple of the Constitution, every friend of humanity, can stand. It is the rock of the Constitution ; and he who places his feet upon it may defy the storm which rages around him.

Sir, a sympathy with the rebellious and seceded States is now a favorite charge to bring against men in public life ; and to relieve themselves of such an odium the brief hour which is allotted to members on this floor is usually occupied in fierce denunciations and labored invective against the crime and folly of secession. I shall follow no such example. Hard words and brave threats neither weaken our enemies nor strengthen us. This war will not be brought to a close by strong expressions of hate, nor is such a course consistent with a high order of statesmanship. If Mr. Seward could instruct our minister at the Court of St. James to “indulge in no expressions of harshness, or disrespect, or even impatience, concerning the seceding States, their agents, or their people,” I will certainly be pardoned for turning my attention to the consideration of our own duties, and the questions within our own control, rather than consume my time in an idle and harmless display of indignation against the wickedness of the Southern rebellion. I shall proceed at once to that consideration.

Other nations, Mr. Chairman, have undergone, as well as we, the heavy

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strokes of adversity. The visitations of God have fallen upon the children of men in all ages. The trumpet of the sixth angel, arousing the spirit of slaughter, has pealed an unbroken strain from the beginning of the world to the present hour. We are not alone or singular in our afflictions, except in the magnitude of the interests involved. In the value of these we stand alone, without a parallel. We hold in trust for posterity interests more vast, rights more dear, and hopes more infinite and stretching further into futurity than were ever before given to the custody of a Government; and our fall as a nation, if fall we must, will be from a loftier height of happiness than any people ever trod before, and into a depth of woe and darkness as hopeless and despairing as that murky clime to which the bright son of the morning fell, in his eternal fall, never to hope again. When I speak of our fall, however, as a nation, I do not allude simply to the dismemberment of our territory—the dissolution of the Union. This, it is true, is a disaster too fearful to contemplate; a vision which I pray may never “sear mine eye-balls” with its awful fulfillment. The Union was established by the prayers, the tears, the groans, the blood of a generation which stands exalted in all that ennobles the human race over all the other generations of men which the earth has witnessed. It comes down to us rich with the odor of blessed memories. To preserve it in its purity, to restore it to its glory, to lift it up once more for the civilized world to look at and admire, to bequeath it unimpaired in its beneficent grandeur to our children, is a cause in which every sacrifice, save that of eternal truth, becomes cheap and easy. For that cause I desire, in my humble capacity, to speak to-day. For that cause I can say, with the eye of Omniscience for my witness, no life between the two oceans that bound this continent would be more willingly offered than mine.

But, a greater evil, a more fatal calamity to us and our posterity than even a hostile line of division across the heart of the nation, is, in my judgment, here threatened on this floor. The fall of this Republic can never be complete until the Constitution is overthrown. A portion of its territory may be torn away, treason may rob it of much of its treasure, the lightning may descend and scatter some of its beautiful branches, and seam and scar its stately trunk; but if the immortal principles of the Constitution are left, the sap of life will rise again, and the leaves will come in the spring. Destroy them, and the tree of liberty, like a girdled tree of the western forests, will hasten to decay, and fall to the earth, to be removed as rubbish by the hand of some tyrant and usurper. Sir, what is it that constitutes the value of American citizenship? Is it vast possessions and extensive boundaries? What to me, what to you, is the possession of the four quarters of the globe, and all the islands of the sea, if we have not as our shield, our buckler, and our defence, the Constitution of our fathers? Within its saered folds are garnered up the great crown-jewels of human freedom. First, and above all, at every hazard, and in the face of all consequences, permit not the citizen to be robbed of these jewels. They constitute his all; they render his person sacred; they make his roof protect him at home; they enable him when abroad to proclaim with more weight than the Roman of old, that he is an American citizen; they open his prison doors in time of trouble; they place him before his accusers; they give him a trial by his peers; they protect him in the enjoyment of the hard-earned labor of his hands; they tell him, in tones of angelic sweetness, to eat in peace the bread which he has earned in the sweat of his face. They are all, all, sir, all that render Ameriean citizenship significant of liberty, significant of free-born, upright, glorious manhood throughout the world. For me, let me wear and enjoy them, though my possessions should be no broader than the narrow limits to which we all hasten, and where the weary heart finds rest.

But we are constantly reminded by those who propose to violate the Constitution, that we are in the midst of a national crisis which calls for the exercise of powers not contained in that instrument. I deny this proposition, and assert, on the contrary, that the restoration of the Union will be accomplished by and through the instrumentality of the Constitution, and a strict observance of its provisions, or not at all. And now, sir, in this connection, I propose to discuss, in some of its most important bearings, one of the measures introduced into this House as the highest offering which, in the judgment of its friends, statesmanship can bring at this time to the cause of our unhappy country.

The members of this body, on the 2d day of December, had but fairly become seated, and the sound of the roll-call had scarcely died away, until with hot haste the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. ELIOT] introduced the following resolutions :

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, 1. That in behalf of the people of these States, we do again solemnly declare that the war in which we are engaged against the insurgent bodies now in arms against the Government has for its object the suppression of such rebellion and the re-establishment of the rightful authority of the national Constitution and laws over the entire extent of our common country ; 2. That while we disclaim all power under the Constitution to interfere by ordinary legislation with the institutions of the several States, yet the war now existing must be conducted according to the ordinary usages and rights of military service, and that during its continuance the recognised authority of the maxim that the safety of the State is the highest law, subordinates rights of property and dominates over civil relations ; 3. That therefore we do hereby declare that, in our judgment, the President of the United States, as the Commander-in-Chief of our army, and the officers in command under him, have the right to emancipate all persons held as slaves in any military district in a state of insurrection against the national Government, and that we respectfully advise that such order of emancipation be issued whenever the same will avail to weaken the power of the rebels in arms, or to strengthen the military power of the loyal forces."

A few moments afterwards the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. STEVENS]—who I think may justly be considered as the leader of his party—not to be outdone, and to assert his right to be looked upon as the head of the abolition church, not even respecting the claims of the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. LOVEJOY,] introduced the following as his plan for the restoration of the Government of our fathers :

"Whereas slavery has caused the present rebellion in the United States; and whereas there can be no solid and permanent peace and union in this Republic so long as that institution exists within it; and whereas slaves are now used by the rebels as an essential means of supporting and protracting the war; and whereas by the law of nations it is right to liberate the slaves of an enemy to weaken his power: Therefore,

"Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President be requested to declare free, and to direct all of our generals and officers in command to order freedom to all slaves who shall leave their masters, or who shall aid in quelling this rebellion.

"Sec. 2. And be it further resolved, That the United States pledge the faith of the Union to make full and fair compensation to all loyal citizens who are and shall remain active in supporting the Union for all the loss they may sustain by virtue of this act."

Not an hour was lost, sir, in the inauguration, on this floor, of the schemes of universal abolitionism and their prolonged discussion. The country witnessed this evil omen with amazement and alarm. The idea that Congress cherished the remotest design of attempting to interfere with or abolish slavery in the Southern States had never entered the minds of the people. That the war in which we are engaged was to be prosecuted for such a purpose they had no right to believe, if there is any faith to be put in the pledges of the public men now in power. But in what light are these subjects placed before the country now ? The distinguished leaders of the party which has con-

trol here on this floor, have, day after day, during this session, proclaimed the power and the purpose by congressional action to strike down the domestic institutions of the States, and I fear they are supported by a majority of the House. The four millions of slaves held by the Southern States are to be declared free by the proclamation of the President or by act of Congress. And other and further atrocities are proposed in this connection which I will allude to before I close.

I wish, first, sir, to show in the amplest and most conclusive manner that this pernicious movement is an act of intolerable bad faith on the part of the party in power towards Union men of the country. I assert here on this floor, and shall prove before I sit down, that, if universal emancipation is now to be the policy of the Government in its prosecution of this war, a foul deception has been practiced on the loyal people of the nation, and our army has been obtained and mustered into the field by false pretences more gross than were ever before perpetrated to obtain the means with which to carry out secret and unhallowed purposes. By what magic cry came six hundred thousand men into the tented field? By what token and signal did they muster for the fierce arena of civil conflict? By what strong appeal were they aroused from their slumbers of peace, and induced to exchange home and its happiness for the dread alarms of war? In what name was the citizen transformed into the soldier? In what sign does he propose to conquer? Sir, these are questions pregnant with the fate of the future. The people are asking them; the soldiers of our great army are asking them, in dismay at the evil machinations of abolitionists in and out of Congress. Their answer is at hand, and embraced within records which will not perish. A few short and eventful months ago the authorities of the Government called for an army more vast than Caesar or Napoleon ever commanded on the field of battle. Such a movement had to be sanctioned by a cause equal in its importance. The cause, as asserted, was one to which no true American could turn a deaf ear. The maintenance of the Constitution, the restoration of the Union, and the enforcement of the laws were proclaimed as the lofty purposes for which the tread of armed men shook the continent. To a people proud of their Government, and supremely blest under its benignant workings, such an appeal was irresistible. With it was mingled none of the heresies which are now the watchwords of a powerful party on this floor.

Let us turn and look back briefly on some incidents of but recent occurrence, but which seem already to be fading from the recollections of men. On the 4th day of March last, in the presence of his listening and wondering countrymen, and in the presence of his oath to support the Constitution, the President of the United States held the following language:

"I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

This position was assumed at a time when every word spoken by the new Executive was carefully weighed by an anxious country; and when in a brief space afterwards the nation was convulsed by actual conflict, this definition of his constitutional power over the subject of slavery was remembered and trusted by a patriotic people. They saw in it a solemn pledge, given in the most deliberate manner, and under circumstances the most imposing, that their energies were not to be called upon by this Administration to overthrow the laws and the guarantees of the Constitution. But the President did not stop there. He went further on that occasion, and used language on the subject of the fugitive-slave law, and our duties under it, which gave hope to the friends of law and order, but which, I fear, will scarcely be considered now as

the utterances of a loyal man by the zealous gentlemen on the opposite side of the Chamber. He spoke on that subject, as follows :

"There is much controversy about the delivering up of fugitives from service or labor. The clause I now read is as plainly written in the Constitution as any other of its provisions. 'No person held to service or labor in one State under the laws thereof escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.' It is scarcely questionable that this provision was intended by those who made it for the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves; and the intention of the lawgiver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution, to this provision as much as any other. To the proposition, then, that slaves whose cases come within the terms of this clause shall be delivered up their oaths are unanimous."

How strange all this sounds here now, and in what startling contrast with the principles daily announced by the great leaders of that party which made Mr. Lincoln President ! No power to touch the institution of slavery in the States, and a faithful enforcement of the fugitive-slave law ! Eleven months ago such was the doctrine proclaimed on the eastern steps of this Capitol by the President. Such the honest, confiding people believed it would continue to be when they threw aside the implements of peaceful industry, and resorted to the sword.

But these positions of the President are now repudiated, because, as it is asserted, they were assumed under circumstances far different from those which exist at present. The shortest answer to this feeble excuse for a flagrant violation of the Constitution exists in the following extract from the message of the President of July 4 to the extra session of Congress :

"Lest there be some uneasiness in the minds of candid men as to what is to be the course of the Government towards Southern States after the rebellion shall have been suppressed, the Executive deems it proper to say it will be his purpose then, as ever, to be guided by the Constitution and the laws; and that he will probably have no different understanding of the powers and duties of the Federal Government relatively to the rights of the States and the people under the Constitution than that expressed in the inaugural address."

Thus was the pledge which was made in the inaugural address, on the 4th of March, renewed in explicit terms on the 4th of July. The fires of civil war which were smouldering and hid in March were leaping up to the very heavens in July. The rebellion which in March looked like a distant speck had spread until it darkened half the sky by midsummer. Its boundaries were as large then as now, and its flag was floating in defiance in sight of the presidential mansion. Battles had been fought, lives lost, property destroyed, treasures plundered, forts taken, the flag torn and dishonored, and the authority of the Government driven out of eleven States of the Union with insult and scorn. Yet, in the face of all this, with the full proportions of this great rebellion in clear view, the President reasserted the policy of the inaugural; and in doing so, again announced that he neither had the power nor the inclination to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists, and that the fugitive-slave law must be enforced and obeyed.

Sir, where then was the indignant thunder which has shook this Hall during the present session ? In what cave were the winds then imprisoned ? What enchantment chained the fiery zeal of the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ELIOT ?] What prudential considerations induced the veteran leader from Pennsylvania [Mr. STEVENS] to nurse his wrath, and keep it warm for a future day ? Where was the able gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. BINGHAM,] who now champions the cause of abolitionism so warmly and so gallantly ? And even the voice of the gentleman from Illinois, [Mr. LOVEJOY,] who, like the war-horse of the Scriptures, is eager for the battle, where the negro is involved, was silent. Ay, sir, they were silent then, and silent all. The day

and the hour had not yet arrived to throw off the disguise which was assumed to hide the purposes which are now avowed. Soldiers were yet rushing to the field. The great army was not yet complete. The music of the Union yet resounded through the land, unmarred by the discordant cry of abolitionism. There were no speeches then in favor of universal emancipation, servile insurrections, the destruction of State Governments, and their reduction to the condition of Territories. Far otherwise.

Mr. BINGHAM. The gentleman will pardon me; I was not altogether silent during the special session upon that subject.

Mr. VOORHEES. Certainly not; but the gentleman will hardly assert that his voice was heard as it has been during the present session.

Mr. BINGHAM. No, sir; but I did something better than speaking. I reported a bill which passed this House, and which, in my judgment, gives freedom to five hundred thousand slaves.

Mr. VOORHEES. But the gentleman did not extend his proposition then to the liberation of the whole four millions of slaves of the South. Yet he has proclaimed that to be the true policy of the Government during the present session on this floor.

Mr. BINGHAM. Of course not; but it did go, in my judgment, to the extent of five hundred thousand slaves.

Mr. VOORHEES. Yes, sir; his proposition at the extra session, he thinks, would liberate only about five hundred thousand slaves; but in his speech on the 15th January, of the present session, he asserts it to be the duty of the Government to declare free the whole four millions of slaves held in the South. But, sir, to proceed.

I have thus shown the faith which the highest officer in the Government plighted with the people on this subject. There I might rest, and call upon him in the name of the people to frown upon the efforts which his political partisan friends are making here to cause that faith to be broken. But there are others of eminent position, and in whom the people have their highest hopes and interests confided, who gave public assurances in the early stages of this war of the manner in which it should be conducted with regard to slavery, to which I desire to call the attention of the House and country.

On the 26th day of May, at Cincinnati, General George B. McClellan, then a name comparatively unknown, now filling the civilized world wherever the story of our great calamity has penetrated, issued his proclamation to the Union men of Western Virginia. With it as his forerunner, he crossed the Ohio river with ten thousand sons of the Great West, and planted his banner on the soil of a slave State. Was his mission to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof," according to the stereotyped war cry now on this floor? Did his soldiers, brave and honest men, feel, according to the speech of the gentleman from Pennsylvania, [M. STEVENS,] that the cause in which they had shouldered their muskets would not enable them to contend successfully with the rebel forces unless their march became a crusade for the freedom of the slave? No, sir, nothing of this. The general commanding held the following language on the manner in which his campaign was to be conducted:

"Notwithstanding all that has been said by the traitors to induce you to believe that our advent among you will be signalized by interference with your slaves, understand one thing clearly: not only will we abstain from all such interference, but we will, on the contrary, with an iron hand, crush any attempt at insurrection on their part."

I remember well how this proclamation of the young Western General rang through the country. Its terms suited the law-abiding people of the mighty Northwest. It filled them with bright anticipations of his future, which I

hope may all be fulfilled. They took this proclamation as a pledge, sanctioned, too, by the Executive, that the arms of the Government were to be used to maintain all the laws, State and Federal, throughout the nation. It was worth, sir, to the recruiting service, a hundred thousand men in the valley of the Mississippi.

I know not how it was received away up towards the north star, in the cold latitude of New England, where the abolition of slavery is an object of far dearer and higher import than the reconstruction of the Union on the basis of the Constitution. But at least no cry of horror arose from that virtuous region then, no explosive protest burst from Puritan lips. Their hour had not been reached, the fullness of time had not come, the ranks of the army were not full, and they waited—yes, sir, they waited! But is the pledge which was given to the true friends of the Constitution and the Union by the commanding general of the armies of the United States on the banks of the Ohio, to be broken on the banks of the Potomac? He has since then drawn his sword in a new and higher field; he has stepped upon a theatre, with the world for his audience; he walks upon the dizzy heights of human greatness, so far as official station can bestow it; the field of fame lies open before him, in which to win a name that will never perish, to become one of the immortal few who cannot die; but no change of circumstances or of fortune can release him, in the minds of an honest and confiding people, from the obligations which he assumed when he opened his career by the invasion of Western Virginia. They call upon him now, as he promised then, to abstain from all interference with the institution of slavery, and with an iron hand to crush any attempt at servile insurrection.

But, sir, I shall proceed with the testimony. The record of the first ninety days of this war is filled with it. No sound was then heard above the roar of the conflict, save the Union, the Constitution, and the enforcement of all the laws. The ear of the new recruit drank in its sweet strains as he left his home to join in “battle’s magnificently stern array.” The poisonous malaria of abolitionism had not then, as now, tainted every gale which swept from this Capitol. Even Massachusetts furnished a high order of evidence to the country that this war was to be conducted within the limits of the Constitution, and that the States of the South were to be protected in the enjoyment of their domestic institutions.

On the 9th day of May, from his headquarters at Annapolis, in the slave State of Maryland, General Benjamin F. Butler spoke as follows, in a letter to Governor Andrew, of Massachusetts, on the subject of his duty in his military capacity towards the institution of slavery. I commend it to the consideration of the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. Eliot,] who introduced the resolutions now under discussion:

“On the morning following my landing, I was informed that the city of Annapolis and environs were in danger from an insurrection of the slave population, in defiance of the laws of the State. What was I to do? I had promised to put down a white mob, and to preserve and enforce the laws against that. Ought I to allow a black one any preference in a breach of the laws? I understood that I was armed against all infractions of the laws, whether by white or black, and upon that understanding I acted, certainly with promptness and efficiency.”

Again, in the same letter, and speaking on the same subject, the following sentiments occur:

“I appreciate fully your excellency’s suggestion as to the inherent weakness of the rebels, arising from the preponderance of their servile population. The question, then, is: in what manner shall we take advantage of that weakness? By allowing, and of course arming, that population to rise upon the defenceless women and children of the country, carrying rapine, arson, and murder—all the horrors of San Domingo a million

times magnified—among those whom we hope to reunite with us as brethren, many of whom are already so, and all who are worth preserving will be when this horrible madness shall have passed away or be thrashed out of them? Would your excellency advise the troops under my command to make war in person upon the defenceless women and children of any part of the Union, accompanied with brutalities too horrible to be named? You will say, 'God forbid!' If we may not do so in person, shall we arm others so to do, over whom we have no restraint, exercise no control: and who, when once they have tasted blood, may turn the very arms we have put in their hands against ourselves, as a part of the oppressing white race?

"The reading of history, so familiar to your excellency, will tell you the bitterest cause of complaint which our fathers had against Great Britain, in the war of the Revolution, was the arming, by the British Ministry, of the red man with the tomahawk and the scalping-knife against the women and the children of the colonies, so that the phrase 'may we not use all the means which God and nature have put in our power to subjugate the colonies,' has passed into a legend of infamy against the leader of that Ministry who used it in Parliament. Shall history teach us in vain? Could we justify ourselves to ourselves? Although with arms in our hands, amid the savage wildness of camp and field, we may have blunted many of the finer moral sensibilities in letting loose four millions of worse than savages upon the homes and hearths of the South, can we be justified to the Christian community of Massachusetts? Would such a course be consonant with the teachings of our holy religion? I have a very decided opinion upon the subject, and if any one desires, and I know your excellency does not, this unhappy contest to be prosecuted in that manner, some instrument other than myself must be found to carry it on."

Thus spoke General Butler, under the eye and the sanction of the President of the United States, on the 9th day of May, 1861. The Capitol was then in danger. The cry that went forth then from here was a burning and constant appeal for armed men to surround and save the archives of the nation. The torn flag of Fort Sumter was held up before the indignant gaze of the country, and a patriotic people were called upon to restore it to its original lustre, and cause it to wave once more over the Government which our fathers ordained. In the midst of all this came the grateful assurance which I have just read, that the laws of the Southern States were to be upheld, and that neither white mobs nor black mobs were to be allowed to violate them. How stands Massachusetts on that question to-day? Does she indorse her general of the 9th of May as he was indorsed by the President? Will she consent that her troops shall be used to put down servile insurrections in the South, and to enforce the laws of slave States as they find them? Will her Representatives on this floor vote money to carry on this war in the manner pledged by General Butler on the 9th day of May? She silently acquiesced in his principles then, and waited for a more auspicious moment for the promulgation of her heresies. Boston sat quietly on her hills, and stifled her groans. She consoled herself with a future hope, and perhaps enjoyed a vision of secret purposes deferred, but at last fulfilled. But, sir, the plain masses of the country, who enjoy none but an outside view of public affairs, looked upon this letter of General Butler, written with the silent approbation of the President, as another high promise, not made to be broken, on the subject of slavery in connection with the war in which we are so unhappily engaged. It may be broken now, it may be treated as idle and unmeaning by a majority of this House; but permit me to say, that when that is done, another and powerful reason will be furnished to posterity for regarding with strong aversion the abolition party of the present day.

But to proceed in the examination of the record. Sir, there is one name which will live long, if not enviably, in connection with the history of this war. Many men have been brought before the public and fame thrust upon them by the convulsive events of the last few months; but the names of none will remain fresh in the minds of the people longer, I imagine, than that of the late Secretary of War, who is now performing a pilgrimage to the cold regions of Russia. The last days of his administration of the War Depart-

ment were signalized by his earnest efforts to arm the slave, and to promote the cause of universal abolitionism. But even he, in the early stage of this great struggle, when he was daily and hourly appealing to the country for troops, left on record the strong condemnation of the policy which he afterwards adopted, and which is sought to be fastened on the country by the action of this House. Mr. Cameron at that time took the pains to tell his patriotic countrymen his views as follows:

"This is a war for the Union, for the preservation of all constitutional rights of States, and the citizens of all the States of the Union."

Who is here to deny that it is the constitutional right of the Southern man to hold slaves? Here is the pledge of Mr. Cameron, then Secretary of War, that that right should be protected. He broke it; it is true, as far as it was in his power to do so; but the people at the time believed him, and flocked to the standard of the Union, never supposing for an instant that they would soon be called upon to strike down the Constitution and destroy constitutional rights.

One more witness I shall call from the Cabinet of the present Administration. The distinguished head of the Department of State, when the booming of the rebellious cannon had scarce died away at Fort Sumter, spoke on this subject to the nations of Europe and to the civilized world. The curtain was withdrawn, and the bloody drama was open to his philosophic mind. He surveyed it calmly, and then fully and clearly wrote down the policy which the Administration now in power would pursue; and in his official capacity pledged the unsullied honor and untarnished faith of the Republic, in the face of the world, for the truth of what he said. Sir, I challenge the attention of Congress and the country, now in this mad hour of desperate measures, to the principles deliberately laid down by the great leader of the great party of the North, when we were not only enlisting our own people in the awful struggle which is upon us, but when we were also seeking favor for our cause in the favorable public opinion of mankind.

On the 22d day of April, 1861, Mr. Seward, writing to Mr. Dayton, our minister at the Court of the Emperor Napoleon, and treating of the subject of the present rebellion, said:

"I need not further elaborate the proposition that the revolution is without a cause; it has not even a pretext.

"It is just as clear that it is without an object. Moral and physical causes have determined inflexibly the character of each one of the Territories over which the dispute has arisen, and both parties after the election harmoniously agreed on all the Federal laws required for their organization. The Territories will remain in all respects the same, whether the revolution shall succeed or shall fail. The condition of slavery in the several States will remain just the same whether it succeed or fail. There is not even a pretext for the complaint that the disaffected States are to be conquered by the United States if the revolution fail; for the rights of the States and the condition of every human being in them will remain subject to exactly the same laws and forms of administration whether the revolution shall succeed or fail. In the one case the States would be federally connected with the new confederacy; in the other, they would, as now, be members of the United States; but their constitutions and laws, customs, habits, and institutions in either case will remain the same.

"It is hardly necessary to add to this incontestable statement the further fact that the new President, as well as the citizens through whose suffrages he has come into the administration, has always repudiated all designs whatever and whenever imputed to him and them of disturbing the system of slavery as it is existing under the Constitution and laws. The case, however, would not be fully presented if I were to omit to say that any such effort on his part would be unconstitutional; and all his actions in that direction would be prevented by the judicial authority, even though they were assented to by Congress and the people."

Sir, this language needs no comment. It speaks plainly for itself. It is

the solemn pledge of the Government that, under no circumstances, will it interfere to change or abolish or modify any of the laws or institutions of the States which are in rebellion. Will that pledge be kept? What say the leaders of the movement for universal emancipation to this? Mr. Seward says that such a measure would be prevented by the judicial authority, even though the President and Congress and the people should all act together for its promotion. What say the profound lawyers on the opposite side to this barrier raised in an unexpected quarter against the fulfillment of their fond hopes? I leave them to dispose of it by some sleight of hand more familiar to them than to me.

Under date of April 10, 1861, Mr. Seward wrote to Mr. Adams, the American minister to England; and in his official instructions to him spoke as follows:

"You will indulge in no expressions of harshness or disrespect, or even impatience, concerning the seceded States, their agents, or their people; but you will, on the contrary, all the while remember that those States are now, as they always heretofore have been, and, notwithstanding their temporary self-delusion, they must always continue to be, equal and honored members of this Federal Union, and that their citizens, throughout all political misunderstandings and alienations, still are and always must be our kindred and countrymen."

On this doctrine, sir, I take my stand. It embraces the deliberate conclusions of my mind and the sentiments of my heart. I believed in the principles laid down by the Secretary of State, on the 10th day of April, when they were written, and I believe in them now. If others have changed since then, I have not. The Union which I seek to have restored is the old Union, as it was made by our ancestors; not a new and different one, shaped and fashioned to suit the capricious notions of modern politicians. I long to see the States once more re-united as "equal and honored members of this Federal Union," with the Constitution unchanged in letter or in spirit, extending its protection and its blessings alike to them all. I have no wish, however, for the kind of a Union which now seems to meet the approbation of many of the distinguished leaders of the dominant party. Rome had her subjugated provinces, reduced to squalid wretchedness by her vast standing armies. Her trembling tributaries wailed and bled beneath her cruel power. Her consuls went forth to govern, to rob, to plunder, to scourge, and to crucify. She reduced independent sovereign States to territorial vassalage. She received their enforced homage as a conqueror. She confiscated their lands and their substance. She filled her lap with extorted wealth. But does the sad sequel to her history commend her policy to us for adoption? Standing armies preyed upon her vitals and smote down her liberties. Unwilling, unequal, and dishonored States arose against her whenever the opportunity offered. The Gaul, the Briton, the Tartar, the Hun, the Goth, the Vandal, all,

"Dealt upon the seven-hilled city's pride,"

rifled her of her glory, and repaid her a thousand fold for the bitter humiliations which her arrogance had inflicted. All history repeats the same teaching!

England, in modern times, has contributed her example to this great lesson of history. Her whole existence has been one protracted struggle to hold within her grasp conquered and vassal colonies. Her success has, indeed, thus far been great, but her experiment is not over. She has formed many unions with weaker Powers whose soil she has laid waste and whose people she has murdered; but what sorrowful spectacles they are! She has a union with Ireland; but who wants to behold one like it on this continent, filled with blood, with bitterness, with tears of grief, with cries of hate, with charging

armies, with revolution following revolution in quick and horrid succession, and with all those repulsive crimes which forever attend such events, and over which humanity has shuddered and wept in all ages? No, sir; let us labor for no such Union as this. All history, all ages, and every clime contain volumes of teaching on this momentous subject. It becomes the American statesmen to heed their warnings. Give us back the Union as it always heretofore has been, consisting of "equal and honored members." Fail to do this; strip the States of their attributes as States under the Constitution and reduce them to territorial bondage, a measure already introduced into the other branch of Congress, and though our armies may be victorious in every field—though they may, in their triumphant march, cross every river, scale every mountain, and encamp in every valley, from the Potomac to Mobile, there will never come a day when the angel of peace will return to the land—there will never come a day when the drum-beat and the roll-call of vast standing armies shall cease to be heard; and there will never come a day when the footfall of the Federal tax-gatherer shall cease to be heard at the threshold of every laborer's hamlet from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean. There will be no peace in such a Union. The lightning of civil war will be forever playing in fitful gleams along our horizon. The people of the South are "our kindred and countrymen," and the blood which we inherit in common, the proud race to which we belong, never yielded a passive obedience to the degrading conditions of inequality and dishonor. I am fully aware that the sword must now bring the conclusion of this unnatural strife. I am fully aware that a result must be attained now on the battle-field. There was a time when it was not so, and history will embalm in everlasting infamy the names of those who rejected peace—who rejected union when both were offered on honorable terms. I leave the past, however, at least for to-day, and deal with the present. Let the armies move on, and bring a speedy issue to this war of "kindred and countrymen;" but let them move in the name of the Constitution; in the name of the laws; in the name of the Union, composed of "equal and honored members;" in the name of God; and guided by the precepts of an enlightened Christianity.

I am not done yet, however, Mr. Chairman, with the recorded pledges of the Government. They exist on every leaf and page of the history of the first three months of this war. They are strewed on every hand during that period, and leave the laborer in that field only the difficulty of selection, not that of discovery. Sir, when that dear and honored State, Kentucky, where my ancestors were born, where they fought, where they died, and where their ashes repose, was trembling in the balance; when her fate from day to day was unknown; when the ties of blood and kindred and similarity of domestic institutions and interests pulled hard against the strong anchor of her fidelity to the Union, and when she poised herself upon her proud neutrality between the North and the South, one of her most eloquent and gifted sons spoke to her on behalf of the present Administration in language which Kentuckians trusted, which they received as an Executive promise, and on the faith of which thousands of her troops are now in the field.

On the 31st day of May, 1861, Joseph Holt wrote his celebrated letter to Mr. Speed, which rang through the country like a clarion. In it he said:

"No excesses will mark the footsteps of the troops of the republic; no institutions of the States will be invaded or tampered with; no rights of persons or property will be violated. The known purposes of the Administration, and the high character of the troops employed, alike guaranty the truthfulness of this statement."

Not content, however, with this most explicit and most satisfactory assurance that the rights of the States were to be respected, Mr. Holt proceeded to

convince Kentucky that her rights in the Territories were also amply secured, and would be carefully guarded by this Administration. He discussed that point as follows :

" The Supreme Court has decided that the citizens of the slave States can, at will, take their slaves into all the Territories of the United States; and this decision, which has never been resisted or interfered with in a single case, is the law of the land, and the whole power of the Government is pledged to enforce it. That it will be loyally enforced by the present Administration, I entertain no doubt. A Republican Congress, at the late session, organized three new Territories, and in the organic law of neither was there introduced, or attempted to be introduced, the slightest restriction upon the right of the Southern emigrant to bring his slaves with him. At this moment, therefore, and I state it without qualification, there is not a Territory belonging to the United States into which the Southern people may not introduce their slaves at pleasure, and enjoy their complete protection."

It is no part of my purpose, at this time, to determine whether Mr. Holt construed the decision of the Supreme Court correctly or not. He is a very eminent and learned lawyer, and his opinion is entitled to great respect. But I simply now make him my authority to show the principles and the policy to which he pledged the Administration before the country in its conduct of the war, and its treatment of the question of slavery. Sumter had fallen. The nation was arming. Soldiers were wanted. Kentucky was to be saved, and language like this was more potent with the lovers of the Constitution and the friends of the old Union, than all the bounty land or monthly pay which the Government had with which to enlist recruits. There it stands, and there it will stand forever, to the honor of him who wrote it, and to the eternal shame and disgrace of those who shall turn their backs upon its teachings, and render false and deceptive its deliberate and solemn promises. I do not assume to speak for the affairs of Kentucky; she does not need my humble voice on this floor. Her own experienced and eloquent Representatives are here to speak for her. But this I may be allowed, as her neighbor and friend and lineal offspring, to say, that if the pledge that has been given to her on the subject of her domestic institutions is now to be broken, and the abolition of slavery declared, the treachery involved in the act will be so dark, the fraud so monstrous, that it will pollute every succeeding page of American history, and crimson the cheeks of our children with shame as they read it.

Sir, one more name I will add. It belongs now to the dead. It is a name which will live long in American history. I oppose it to the mad fanaticism which reigns in this Hall, and by and in its authority denounce the wicked purposes of abolitionism. I read from the last speech of the great popular tribune, Stephen A. Douglas :

" We must not invade constitutional rights. The innocent must not suffer, nor women and children be the victims. Savages must not be let loose."

How pregnant and full of meaning are these three short sentences! The Constitution must be maintained at all hazards, and the rights of the South under it must not be invaded. " Savages must not be let loose." This was spoken in June. The fell measure of the rebellion was before him, yet almost with his dying words he spoke for the preservation of the constitutional rights of the States; and as if with prophetic eye foreseeing the evil designs which were then cherished in secret, he lifted up his voice in behalf of the innocent—the women and the children of the South—and warned his countrymen against abolitionism in that short but powerful sentence, " Savages must not be let loose." Sir, there was a magnetic power in his voice while living; and though he sleeps now from the warfare of life, and shall awake no more, yet from the dread precincts of the grave is still ringing over all the land, in

the tones of a monarch among men, his lofty and solemn injunctions that the Constitution, as it was then, must so remain for the North, for the South, and for all future time. This injunction may now be despised and discarded in this Hall by those who so recently for the first time have taken his name upon their lips to praise. They may reject and spurn it, as they do, and as they will; but when that is done, the cries of a deceived, an indignant, and an outraged people will arise from the plains of the Northwest, and from all sections of the country, like the mighty sound of rushing waters, calling for vengeance on those who have fatally stabbed the Constitution under the smiling and hypocritical guise of a false and assumed friendship. I may not live long, Mr. Chairman. My life is perhaps bounded by narrow limits, but I trust that I may live till the sun rises on the day of a popular reckoning on this subject. I fear not its judgment. I invoke with confidence its decrees on the humble record of my brief term of public life. Others, and not I—not those who take the Constitution as the measure of their authority to act here and elsewhere—will be found calling on the mountains to hide them from the wrath of their constituents. To that day I take my appeal; before that tribunal I lodge my cause.

But, sir, once more, and finally, to the recorded pledges of the Government. I have given you the pledges of those in authority in whom the people were entitled to confide. I will give you now the voice of the people themselves, as assembled here in both branches of Congress, through their Representatives.

On the 11th day of February, 1861, in view of the gathering storm which has since broken upon the country, Mr. SHERMAN, of Ohio, then a Representative, now a Senator, in Congress, introduced into this body the following resolution.

"That neither the Congress of the United States nor the people or governments of the non-slaveholding States have the constitutional right to legislate upon, or interfere with, slavery in any of the slaveholding States in the Union."

This resolution passed this House unanimously upon a vote take by yeas and nays, many of the present champions of abolitionism being present, and voting for it. Of course, this will be met by them now with the new doctrine, that a state of war enables us to legislate on forbidden subjects, and changes the express, written letter of the Constitution; that we were at peace when this resolution was passed, and that we are at war now. We have heard much of this doctrine. It has been ably and vehemently urged. But, to my mind, it is the most dangerous dogma ever promulgated in a free country. It puts us out far from shore in the open sea, with the polar star obscured, without chart or compass to guide our course. "State necessity" is to be substituted for the well-known provisions of the Constitution! Strange and alarming doctrine in the American Congress! It calls up before the mind the bloodiest and darkest pages in history. It is the plea by which martyrs have been chained to the stake, and have ascended the scaffold in all ages. It erected the guillotine, and held a carnival of horror in France during the reign of terror. It is the founder of bastiles and inquisitions. It is of no kin to freedom. It is a foe to liberty. It is the monstrous engine of oppression by which the accidental majority of to-day, unchecked, unlimited, and uncontrolled by law, may crush, plunder, and murder the minority. It is the bloody, dripping sword of irresponsible power. State necessity! I know no "State necessity" equal to that which our oaths, registered in heaven, impose upon us to support the Constitution in all its parts as our sainted fathers made it.

Such is the "State necessity," sir, which I acknowledge, and none other.

In peace or in war, the written Constitution gives us all the power we have; and on this point, I content myself with referring, as authority, to the speech made at the late extra session by the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky, [Mr. CRITTENDEN.] We all remember it. It has never been answered. It never will be. According to his construction of the Constitution, there was a total absence of all power in Congress over the subject of slavery in the States, in war as well as in peace. I will balance the weight of his honored name against the advocates of a different construction. It is a name that belongs to history. It is the name of a profound lawer and an experienced statesman, and will live long and gratefully in the hearts of his countrymen.

Sir, Congress, however, spoke again on this important subject.. Who will forget the scene who witnessed it? Who will forget the 22d day of last July in this Hall? It was the darkest day in all the calendar of American history. Dismay or gloom sat on every face. A routed army was pouring into the city, and a triumphant enemy was at the gates of the capital. In that hour of extremity and peril, when a new army was to be raised, and the old one encouraged and reinvigorated, Congress announced to the country, and to the whole world, the policy which should govern the future conduct of the war. On motion of the distinguished gent. man from Kentucky, [Mr. CRITTENDEN,] Congress said :

“That this war is not waged on their part in any spirit of oppression, nor for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, nor purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired; and that as soon as these objects are accomplished, the war ought to cease.”

The nation heard this, and loyal men, trusting and confiding, again poured with military tread from the loyal States to the banks of the Potomac. They were repelled then by no outcry from either end of the Capitol, that slavery, as the cause of the war, must be abolished, and that the seceded States had committed political suicide, and must be reduced, by the force of arms, to territories, and governed as such by Federal authority.

Mr. Chairman, I am amazed, utterly amazed, when I contrast the present with the past on this subject. All is changed, at least so far as Congress is concerned. Pledge upon pledge has been made by every department of the Government in the opening stages of this conflict. The national faith has been plighted at home and abroad in the most binding and obligatory manner, that the domestic laws and customs of the seceded States were not to be violated, that slavery was not to be abolished, that “savages were not to be let loose.” We heard no indignant protests then against this policy. Tongues that are now loud in its denunciation were then mute. Voices that are now high in wrath against it were then silent.

An army, however, of six hundred thousand men now stands banded together under the stern control of military discipline. In that, I suppose, the object of conservative pledges is accomplished, and the time has arrived for the fulfillment of the purposes of this war, according to the views of abolitionists. They demand now that all these pledges shall be broken. They demand that the faith of the Government shall be dishonored. They demand that the present Administration shall be disgraced in the eyes of all the world by abandoning its own deliberate construction of the Constitution—its own boldly and openly marked line of policy. They demand that the army shall be deceived; that the promises by which it was raised shall be proven false; that the soldier shall now fight and die in the prosecution of purposes which were concealed from him when he enlisted, and which he abhors. They de-

mand that the people shall be betrayed, and their hard-earned money taken to support this war, conducted on principles which they utterly repudiate. And, above all, they demand that the Constitution be ruthlessly violated; that the laws be stricken down, and that the old Union, such as our fathers made it, shall never be restored. Had they avowed their purposes at the opening of this war, and appealed to the country to support the atrocious doctrines which they now avow; had they made their demands then, no proud army would now line a thousand miles of border; but, rather, as my colleague [Mr. DUNN] has well and truthfully said on this floor, our army would have been composed of a small and deluded band, such as followed John Brown to Harper's Ferry. Let these demands be granted now, and the appalling fact will stand confessed that a stupendous fraud has been practiced on the nation, and that the army of the United States has been obtained by FALSE PRETENSES. Let these demands be granted now, and no American Union will ever more bless the eyes of men. No more

"Will bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar."

Mr. Chairman, I represent, in part, the people of a great State. Indiana may point proudly to her escutcheon. It is gemmed all over with honor. She did not want this war. She was for compromise and peace, and is now, when they can be obtained, as they once could, with honor and upon the principles of the Constitution. But once cast into the conflict, though by no act of hers, she has wedded her name to victory on every battle-field where her troops have drawn the sword. Go and ask her sixty thousand soldiers now in the field, encircled as they are with a halo of gallant achievements, whether these demands shall be granted, and listen to their answer. That answer will be, that they are fighting to restore a Union of "equal and honored members;" that they have encountered the perils of war to restore the Constitution exactly as it came from the hands of Washington, and to enforce all the laws, to uphold all the institutions, to protect and defend all the rights of every person and State under that Constitution, and that if such is no longer the policy of the Government, they will turn their faces homeward, deceived and betrayed. Go and ask the tax-payers and the voters of that noble State for what they toil and pour out their money. They will answer that they live on the tributaries of the great thoroughfare of their trade and commerce, the Mississippi river; that their fortunes are forever linked by nature and the great laws of geographical formation with the States which are washed by its descending waters; and that by virtue of, and in strict accordance with the Constitution, they intend to secure a free passage to the Gulf of Mexico; and that they will everywhere uphold the rights of others as well as their own; that they labor to maintain and preserve the laws, and not to trample them under foot; and that they seek a reconstruction of the Union on precisely the same basis on which it was made by the founders of the Government. They want no four millions of slaves set free. They have no money with which to purchase territories for vast schemes of colonization. They are opposed to gigantic standing armies, with which to hold, from year to year, and through all time to come, degraded States in subjection. In this hour of triumph the true friends of the Union everywhere demand that a policy for the reconstruction of the Government be proclaimed from here which shall insure for the future a Union of "equal and honored members." Let our "kindred and countrymen" of the South know that liberality and magnanimity animate our councils, and that the spirit of vengeance, intolerance, and spoliation, has no place in our midst. In this day of victory let the heralds of the Government

go before our armies, and proclaim peace and Union, on the basis of equality, on the basis of the Constitution, and on the basis of the laws. Let them announce that the pledges of the Government so freely given in the early part of this struggle will not be broken at the mad behests of abolitionism; but that the condition of every human being in the South shall remain unchanged, whether the revolution shall succeed or fail.

Sir, to my mind it is an omen of evil that the spirit of abolitionism, like a lurking fiend of mischief, a Mephistopheles of iniquity, should boldly stalk in here, and, in such a crisis as this, assume to control American legislation. Its croaking, raven cry is a baleful sound to the cause of the Union. Its arrogant and defiant demands fill the future with gloom. It no longer comes in here the skulking and despised miscreant that it once was; but, with the elevated mien and swaggering port of a conqueror, it strides forward over the mangled form of constitutional Government. It no longer hides and cowers and denies its name and its nature, and assumes false shapes, like Satan in the garden of Paradise, with which to beguile and deceive, as it did a few short years ago. The veiled prophet of Khorasson has revealed himself, and his hideous face is almost enough to affright union and concord from the land.

Why comes this fell spirit here now accompanied by its train of horrors? It has no merit in the past to entitle it to control the present and shape the future. It can point to no good act that it has ever accomplished. The cause of abolitionism is barren of beneficent results. No State, no Territory has it ever dedicated to free labor, and no slave has it ever set free except in violation of law. It has never had the sanction of the great and good names which, like stars in the clear upper sky, adorn and illuminate our history. On the contrary, it has been the object of their incessant maledictions from the hour of its birth. Its presence in the Halls of Congress was their abhorrence, and they prognosticated "evil, and evil only, and that continually," from its influence in public affairs.

Why comes it here now? It never was a friend to the Union, and it is not to-day. It never wanted a Union with slave States, or a fellowship with slave-holders, and does not now. It is at war with the Constitution; it is an enemy to the Government; it is the twin monster to the doctrine of secession, and like the withered and hateful hags on the blasted heath of Scotland, the two together concocted the hell-broth of the present civil war. Let the spirit of the Union, born of the Constitution, rise up between them like a bright angel, and banish them both forever. Then will the nation renew its mighty youth, and go on again in its swift flight of prosperity and renown. Then will "kindred and countrymen" once more assemble under the same flag, and obeying the command of the Prince of Peace, "love one another."